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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 18, 2010
NR # 10-72

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Food Safety During a Power Outage

San Bernardino County, Environmental Health Services received notice that numerous homes and businesses in Havasu Landing have experienced a power outage. Environmental Health would like to extend the following message to educate affected residents about the effects of power outages on food and food related illnesses during and after a loss of electricity. Environmental Health Services offers the following recommendations for protecting perishable foods during an extended (greater than 3 hours) power outage.

When the Power Goes Out:

When a power outage occurs note the time (if possible) the power was lost. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. A refrigerator should keep foods cold for approximately **4-6** hours depending on the air temperature outside the refrigerator and frequency of the refrigerator door opening. A large freezer may maintain foods frozen for approximately 2 days. Thus, in the case of a natural disaster where power may be out for greater than one day food items like, meats, milk, and poultry may be placed in the freezer to extend their shelf life.

All frozen perishable foods that have ice crystals (semi frozen) may be refrozen and is safe for consumption. If the freezer food has thawed: Then each food item should be evaluated to determine if the food item reached a temperature greater than 41 degrees Fahrenheit for longer than **2 hours**. When in doubt, throw it out!

Once the Power is Restored:

Once the power is restored open the refrigerator and freezer to check the inside temperatures and take the following actions:

- 1) **If the power was out for less than 4 hours:**
Refrigerated and freezer food items should be safe.

- 2) **If the Power was out for more than 4 hours:**
All refrigerated perishable food items (i.e. meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) should be discarded if the temperature is measured above 41 degrees Fahrenheit for greater than a 2 hour period of time. When in doubt discard any questionable food items, it is better to err on the side of caution than risk illness.

For more information contact San Bernardino County, Environmental Health Services at 909-884-4056 or visit the website at www.sbcounty.gov/dehs.

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